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Grétry - William Tell - 1831

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MUSIC

# WILLIAM TELL,

## A Lyric Drama,

IN THREE ACTS,

BY M. PELISSIER.

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MUSIC BY GRETRY.

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*Translated literally, for the use of Visitors to the*

## French Opera.

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TRANSLATED BY W. P. W.

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## Dramatis Personæ.

GESSLER, governor.
WILLIAM TELL.
OLD MECTAL.
MECTAL, son.
PIEFFRE, goat-herd.
GEORGE, soldier.
RUDENZ, soldier.
JORG, soldier.

EDWIGE, wife of Tell.
MARY, his sister.
WILLIAM, his son.

Officers, Soldiers, Swiss Peasants, &c.

(*The Scene lies in Switzerland, in the Canton of Uri.*)

# WILLIAM TELL,

## A LYRIC DRAMA, IN THREE ACTS.

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## ACT FIRST.

*The Theatre represents a picturesque view of Switzerland. On the left is the dwelling of William Tell.*

### SCENE FIRST.

*William, and afterwards Mary.*

*When the curtain rises, the little William, on the peak of a rock, plays on his bagpipes the "Ranz des Vaches," which echo appears to repeat. A Shepherd leaning on his staff, is engaged in listening to him, while a flock of sheep are seen passing in the back ground.*

*William soon descends from the rock, approaches the cabin, and raps.*

*Wil.* Aunt Mary,—wake up; Mary—she forgets that she is to be married to-day to Mectal. (*He collects some pebbles, and throws them at the shutter.*)—Mary! my aunt—oh, now I see her.

*Mary, coming out of her cottage and looking to a side of the hill.*

SONG.

The day breaks o'er the glacier
In the valley, which grows light;
I hear yet the echoes repeat

The song of the goat-herd;
Thus tra, la, la—
It sounds like that.
When we rise before day,
It is love that moves us.
Oh, yes!
That is true.
Tra, la, la.

Sleep and love
Are seldom together.
For myself, without sleeping,
I see day break again;
And tra, la, la,
Thus we sing.
The young girl who is to be married,
Scarcely ever sleeps on that day—
Oh, yes!
It is so.
Tra, la, la.

*Wil. approaching.* Good day, my aunt. I thought that you were asleep.

*Mary.* It is a long time since all have been up; shepherd, ploughman and sheep. Your mother is distributing to the servants their tasks.

*Wil.* And my father?

*Mary.* He has gone to the city, to meet—

*Wil.* Mectal, thy future husband? Aunt, your children will be my cousins?

*Mary.* Undoubtedly.

*Wil.* Yes, my cousins.

*Mary.* Yes, thy cousins.

*Wil.* Oh girls! give me first some girls for cousins, I pray.

*Mary.* Does that depend on me?

*Wil.* Well, I will speak to your husband—here he is now; I hear him.

*Enter Mectal.*

*Mec.* Dear Mary.

*Mary.* Dear Mectal.

*Mec.* This then is the day of our wedding; happy day! which was delayed so long to my love. All the Canton wishes to partake of the festival, and the borders of the lake, even to the hills of Sarnem, every where re-echo with the sounds of joy and pleasure.

DUETT.

Sweet echo of the woods and mountains,
Repeat our songs of love;
And you also { my / his } companions,
In the valley celebrate this happy day.

*Mectal.*

What happiness heaven presents to us.
It unites our hearts forever;
All our days will pass peacefully,
In our happy family.

DUETT.

What happiness, &c. Sweet echo, &c.

*Wil. to Mec.* My friend, embrace me now! Does the sun rise later with you than with us?

*Mary.* It is nearly an hour since—

*Mec.* My father has detained me; you know

that he is the chief magistrate of the Canton, and since day break I have been obliged to assist him to re-assemble the seniors of the country, for a grievous affair has happened.

*Mary.* What then has happened to you?

*Mec.* Nothing to us, but something to poor Seppi, our neighbor. Yesterday as he was laboring quietly, an emissary of the Governor came to seize, before his eyes, his fine yoke of oxen, because the poor devil had not paid, I know not what new imposition; for we have an abundance of taxes since this Gessler has been governor of the Canton. Seppi represents to him, that if his only means of livelihood were taken from him, far from paying the taxes, he would not be able to give bread to his family. "If the laborer wishes bread," answered this wretch, "let him yoke himself to his plough."

*Wil.* The villain!

*Mec.* And in pronouncing these words he began to unyoke the oxen. Then Seppi, pale with anger, with the butt end of his goad which he held in his hand, struck, with a violent blow, the audacious satellite.

*Wil.* That was well done!

*Mec.* He utters a cry, and notwithstanding the murmurs and even the resistance of the people, the soldiers seize upon Seppi, and drag him to a dungeon, menacing him, and threatening to make him atone by a prompt punishment, for what they call an outrage against authority.

*Mary.* Oh heavens!

*Mec.* My father, with the elderly men of the Canton, have been gone since day-break to make humble reclamations. I wished to follow him, but he sent me on before, saying, "you are too angry"—(and in truth I was not altogether in a good humour)—"Go," said he, "go and acquaint William Tell and his family, of the cause of my delay." I have come for this purpose, but now that I have seen you, I regret that I left my father.

*Mary.* Why?

*Wil.* He will be back soon.

*Mec.* The governor does not like him, I well know, because in every instance he has always contended for justice, and for the maintenance of our liberty; and if he were to say too openly to Gessler, what he thinks—

*Wil.* Fear nothing: you know if the governor wishes to do him any wrong, my father will be there to defend him.

*Mec.* Is William Tell at the city? this circumstance cheers me. His presence will recall my father to moderation, by reminding him that his children wait for nothing but himself in order to be happy.

*Wil.* Ah! there is Pieffre the goatherd! do not believe him, because it is said that he is as cunning as an old monkey, and I am sure that he is going to cast some spell on you.

*Mec.* Child!

*Wil.* Child? that does not hinder that he

roamed the other day near the hut of Burmann. Well, all Burmann's sheep are dead.

*Mec.* Yes, of the scab.

*Enter Pieffre.*

*Mary, aside.* I do not believe in his sorcery; but he is a babbler and a slanderer.

*Pief. advancing and looking at William, who examines him from head to foot.* I reckon from the manner in which you look at me, that I am not well spoken of.

*Mec.* In faith, Pieffre, that may well be. You are accused of casting spells. Give us a good one at least.

*Pief.* He is very good at casting spells. (*To Mary*)—Is your brother here?

*Mary.* No.

*Pief. with a movement of contradiction well marked.* No! already out?

*Wil.* Hold! you ought to know that well; every one says that you are a sorcerer.

*Pief. aside.* Yes, a sorcerer! (*aloud*) And they put upon my back all the hail that falls on their corn; all the cattle that die in their stalls. They will say soon, that I cause rain and good weather—and the truth is, I am no more a sorcerer than you are. I chat with those who are chatting, I give advice to those who ask it of me; and my experience makes me predict, to those who consult me, more evil than good, because I have lived long, and I know mankind, and that is the whole of it.

*Mec.* And if I asked you your opinion of our future?

*Pief.* I would say that I know no more about it than you do; but that I can give you a piece of advice with regard to your happiness.

*Mec.* What is that?

*Pief.* Live peacefully in your cottage, and never permit your wife to absent herself, since you think it expedient to take to yourself one; for at two steps from happiness, misfortune may reach you.

*Mec.* And why do you think so?

*Pief.* Why; because you are going to have a very pretty wife.

*Mec.* Have you found it out?

*Pief.* Yes; but take care that another who might find it out as I have, does not make himself certain of it from too near; because you see that it might happen to you, as it has happened to the wife of Kunz the fisherman, of the Canton of Zurich.

*Mary.* And what has happened to his wife!

*Pief.* Do you not know.

*Mary.* He is going to tell us some wicked action.

*Pief.* I do not say the contrary; but unhappily I have not the merit of the invention. How, do you not know what has happened to the wife of Kunz? She was handsome, like yourself.

*Mec.* Well! what then?

*Pief.* She fell in the way of the governor, Gessler, who is a connoisseur.

*Mec.* What next?

*Pief.* He inquired her name, and went to visit her during the absence of her husband; he has proposed to her, it is not known what, or rather it is too well known what; that did not quite suit her—he insisted, and she got angry; he wished to play the governor and master, and she ran away—her husband arrived—some soldiers also—and afterwards some of the peasants; and finally, after all this, the dwelling of poor Kunz was razed to the ground, and he would have been killed too, if he had not had the caution to quit the country, with his wife.

*Mec.* Quit the country!

*Mary.* Ah me! in what an age we live.

*Pief.* This proves to you that a woman ought not to have two pretty eyes; or at least ought to avoid being in the way of an inflammable governor.

*Wil.* He never has anything except wickedness to tell of.

*Pief.* If people did not commit wickedness, I would not speak of it.

*Mary.* He has made Mectal quite sad.

*Mec.* No, no—I was thinking—

*Wil.* Oh, there I see mamma!

*Enter Edwige.*

*Edw. to the servants.* Spread the large table at the further end of the basement story; there will be dancing before the door.

*Wil. running to embrace her.* Good morning, mamma, good morning!

*Edw. suffering herself to be embraced.* It is well, it is well! Ah, you there, Mechtal! How, alone! where is your father, and my husband?

*Mec.* They will arrive undoubtedly together.

*Mary, to Pief.* Do not tell her what you know.

*Edw.* Since all the reports of extortions and tyrannical acts of this governor, Gessler, I never see my husband go out without a pang.

*Pief.* It is true that some misfortune has happened.

*Edw.* Whenever his absence is a little prolonged, a thousand fears, a thousand disquiets—

*Wil. who had gone towards the hill.* There he is! there he is!

*Enter Tell—he has an agitated air.*

*All, running to meet him.* My father! my husband! my brother! my friend!

*Tell.* Good morning, Edwige, my good sister, and my friend.

*Mec. disturbed.* And my father?

*Tell.* Thy father? He is yet at the castle of the governor, from which he cannot come until he has had an audience, which will soon be given him, for Gessler who went from Altorf at day break, at this moment re-enters the city.

*Pief.* How then, is the ceremony put off for some time, or till to-morrow.

*Tell.* No, no; if my old friend is detained

too long, we may commence it at any time; he has made me promise that we would.

*Pief. apart to Tell.* He is right; the time for festival is lost, when a sacred duty—

*Tell, taking him by the hand.* I understand you.

*Edw.* What an agitated air he has. (*aloud*) Mary, go and see about the preparations. Accompany her, Mectal.

*Wil.* And I am going to meet the guests.

*Pief.* We will go together.

*Wil. who has taken his cross bow.* I'll show you how well I know already to shoot an arrow. Ah, see here papa, my bow string is broken; tie it again for me.

*Pief.* I will do it.

*Tell.* No. My son, a good huntsman ought to fix his own bow himself.

*Pieffre and William go out through the back part of the stage. Mectal and Mary enter the hut.*

*Tell and Edwige.*

*Edw.* You exercise betimes this child in shooting the bow.

*Tell.* Thus ought to commence whoever wishes to make himself master of it.

*Edw.* May it please God that he never may become so skilful. I have already panics enough that I experience, when I know that you are on the summits of our glaciers. Every time you bid me adieu, I tremble lest I may never see you again; until your return, I fancy you rolling

down a precipice, overwhelmed by an avalanche, or falling a victim to the deceitful ice, suddenly breaking in beneath your feet. Ah! if I must fear thus for my child also—

*Tell.* He should learn to brave every difficulty, to be a man. Whoever wishes to struggle successfully against the hardships of life, should know how to defend himself, and even to make the attack if necessary.

*Edw.* Always threatening and gloomy in your manner! My dear I have not known you like yourself for some days past; why have you this uneasiness?

*Tell.* It is nothing.

*Edw.* You deceive me—you have some vexation; confide it to me—am I not thy faithful Edwige? what can thus torment you?

*Tell.* Alas! do you not perceive the will of Switzerland, of oppressed Switzerland, crushed by the weight of a despotic tyranny.

*Edw.* By these angry words, by the anger kindling in thy eyes, I fear I have guessed rightly. Some plot is perhaps forming, and you have entered into this secret alliance.

*Tell.* You have seen me descend to the bottom of an abyss to succour a lamb, surely I will not abandon my friends in the hour of danger.

*Edw.* They will place you in the most dangerous situations.

*Tell.* Every one should serve in proportion to his strength.

*Edw.* My dear, think of the power of the fierce Gessler! do not give him a hold upon you—you know the hatred he bears you.

*Tell.* What is his hatred to me? I do what is right, and I fear nobody—besides, he will let me alone now; I hope so at least.

*Edw.* And how do you know?

*Tell.* How—just now returning from Altorf, I followed across the rocks a road from which I could not deviate, for above me rose perpendicularly steep rocks, and below me the torrent roared, with a horrible noise; Gessler meets me; separated from his attendants, he was alone; there we were, man to man, and beside us the abyss. He casts his eyes on me, and recognises me—he grows pale, his knees bend under him; I see him leaning against the rock, and ready to faint--I feel moved with pity—I go to him with a respectful air—"It is I sire," said I; but his tongue could not articulate a word; only he made a sign to me to continue on my way. I passed on, and sent to him his attendants.

*Edw.* He has trembled before you; he will never forgive you—ah! at least moderate thy passion.

*Tell.* Yes, I will govern myself, I promise you I will.

DUETTE.—*Edwige.*

Swear to me by thy child—
My dear spouse, think to restrain yourself.

*Tell.*

Yes, by thy son I take my oath:

Believe me I will be able to restrain myself.

*Edwige.*

Ah, when thou leavest me,
My heart is sad and full of fright.
I can but groan and fear.

*Together.*

Ah! when thou leavest me,
My sad heart is full of fear.
Learn to restrain thyself, my dear!
Think of thy son, think of my grief,
And see what would be our woes!

*Tell.*

Ah! when I depart from thee,
Thy memory remains with me.
Yes, my heart shall itself restrain;
I feel thy grief, I feel thy pain,
And see what would be our woes.

*Edwige.*

O happy spouse, and happier parent!

*Together.*

No, no, never on this earth
E'er dwelt happier than we!
Of such happiness, of a lot so sweet,
Gessler may well jealous be.

*Tell.*

By which torments he infects
This happiness so pure and perfect.

*Edwige.*

To this tyrant what have we done?

*Together.*

Every thing to his eyes seems a crime!
Never does his rigor pardon!

Tyrant, have you not enough of victims.
Must thy crimes
Chill every heart.
You smile at our tears
When you oppress us.
Every day thy crimes
Increase our woes.

*Tell.* Dear Edwige, let us discard these painful thoughts, and if we can, let us forget this Gessler, and all his fury.

*Edw.* You have promised me to avoid him.

*Tell.* I am sanguine in my hopes that he will not seek me more. But let us busy ourselves about our young lovers.

*Edw.* Are we not waiting for the venerable Mectal?

*Tell.* We can go whenever we wish it; he told me he would join us at the temple.

*Enter Mectal, (son) Mary, William, Villagers.*

*Wil. running up to them.* Here we are! here we are! and the guests, and all the village!

*Chorus.*

Young lassies,
Young lassies,
Come / Let us go } and seek pleasure
Beneath beech trees.
Love again unites { you, / us,
To the sweet music of our bagpipes
Love will soften { you. / us.

Young lassies,
Young lassies
Come } and seek pleasure
Let us go }
Beneath the beech trees.

*They embrace each other and shake hands.*

*Wil.* Oh! what a pretty wreath—it is for my aunt, for Mary? Mamma, why do they not put one on the boys too?

*Edw.* Because they do not deserve it.

*Wil.* Ah! bah! they do not deserve it—the poor boys, there is always something to be said to them.

*Edw.* That is right, my little reasoner.

*A piece, together.*

[During this voluntary piece, Edwige enters the cottage and brings out her sister—the bridegroom and bride advance in front. Edwige places the wreath on Mary's head.]

*Edwige.*

May you my sister, some day,
In the bosom of thy family,
Thus crown thy daughter,
To give her up to love.

*Chorus.*

May your love be happy—
May it make your days happy.

*Tell, to Mectal.*

May you Mectal, some day,
As a good father of thy family,
Thus give up thy daughter
To the prayers of love.

*Chorus.*

May heaven grant your prayers!
May your marriage be happy—
May your love be blessed—
May it make your days happy.

*Enter Pieffre.*

[At the end of the piece Pieffre appears on the rock, with a frightened air, and disordered, as a man out of breath by long running—he makes a sign to Tell to come and speak to him. He goes to him—Pieffre descends to meet him; every one is surprised by his animated gestures, and seems frightened by the exclamations of Tell, who cries,]

*Tell.* O heavens! is it possible! how horrid!

[They all approach tumultuously.]

*Edw.* My dear, what has happened?

*Mec.* Why is indignation thus painted on thy face?

*Tell.* Do not interrogate me—or rather it is proper for all to know it, for all Switzerland to be told of this frightful crime.

*Mec.* Thy words chill the blood.

*Tell, taking his hand.* You will soon shudder, but bear like a man the stroke that awaits you.

*Mec.* Me?

*Tell.* Yes, thee.

*Mec.* Expectation kills me—speak.

*Tell.* Thy father—

*Mec.* Is he dead?

*Pief.* No: I have just learned from Walter

how all happened. Your father was with the old men and the people in the audience chamber. Gessler entered—some representations excited his anger, which burst forth in threats; a general murmur arose. "Do you rebel," he cried, "I will easily make you submit to my will, and bend you to the yoke." Then placing his cap on a pole, he orders it to be carried immediately to the public square, and that every one should salute, in passing, this token of his power.

*Tell.* What an insult.

*Mec.* And my father?

*Pief.* Your old father spoke in the name of all. "What, sire," said he, "force us Swiss to bow themselves thus!" "I wish it." "You will never obtain it, and may heaven preserve me from seeing such infamy." "Be it so, insolent old man"—

*Mec.* Did he say that?

*Pief.* "Thy prayers are heard; thou shalt never see it."

*Mec.* Oh, my God!

*Tell.* Collect yourself.

*Pief.* And suddenly he gives the order to thrust a red-hot iron in his eyes.

*Mec.* My father's?

*All.* How horrible!

*Mec.* And I was not there to defend you, my father! He will never more see the light! he never will see again his beloved son! my father, oh my blind father!

FINALE—*All,*

Great God! what barbarity.
Of this virtuous old man,
To have burned out his eyes.

*Tell and Mectal.*

And this monster is yet alive!

*Mectal.*

I hear his voice, which cries to me
Ah, my son revenge me!

*Tell.*

Thou hearest his voice which cries to thee
Ah, my son revenge me!

*Mectal.*

Adieu, I go. *Exit.*

*Edwige, to Tell who prepares to follow him.*

What are you going to do?

*William.*

Here is your bow.

*Tell.*

Give it me,
I love to receive it from thee.

*Edwige.*

To moderate thy anger,
Take with thee our child.
My dear spouse, by seeing him,
You will think of his mother,
And will be more prudent.

*All.*

Think that you are a father!

*Tell, pointing to his heart.*

Ah! 'tis there my anger burns.

*Dissimulating his rage.*

Yes, my wife, I will be prudent.

*Chorus.*

This Gessler is so severe,
For heaven's sake be prudent!
O Tell, his dreadful anger bear;
In heaven's name be prudent!

[Tell and William climb the rock. Edwige, Mary, Pieffre and Chorus follow them to the bottom of the hill, singing this last verse. The curtain falls.]

END OF ACT FIRST.

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## ACT II.

[The stage represents the public square in the country town of Husnack, where is seen on high, the castle of Gessler. In the back part of the stage, is a gothic post, surmounted by a hat, adorned with feathers. Soldiers force passengers to salute it, and to doff their hats.

### SCENE FIRST.

*Rudenz and Jorg, sentinels.*

DUO.—*Rudenz.*

How, is he arrested!

*Jorg.*

He is arrested.

*Rudenz.*

Upon honor he has well deserved it.

*They march to and fro.*

*Rudenz, pointing to the hat.*

All must submit.

*Jorg.*

All must submit.

*Rudenz.*

Our chief is not mild.

*Jorg.*

Myself, I obey my watchword.
Hats off.

*Rudenz.*

Kneel.

*Jorg.*

Hats off.

*Rudenz.*

Kneel.

*They march.*

*Jorg.*

But there they all will go
To bend the knee.

*Rudenz.*

Certainly all will go there

*Jorg.*

To bend the knee.

*Rudenz.*

All.

*Jorg.*

All.

*Rudenz.*

All.

*Jorg.*

All!

*Together.*

Certainly all will go there,
All, all,
To bend the knee.

*They march.*

*Rudenz.*

See down there how they yield to the order!

*Jorg.*

How they yield to the order!

*Rudenz.*

They make me pity them, if I may say so between us.

*Jorg.*

And me too, and I am not tender.

*Rudenz.*

But do what they will they must all surrender.

*Together.*

All, all,
Certainly all will go there,
To bend the knee.

*Rud. pointing to Pieffre who is bowing in the back part of the stage.* Hold, there is a fellow who bows without being commanded.

*Enter Pieffre.*

*Pief.* Your servant sirs, you have seen that—

*Jorg.* Yes, you are a brave fellow.

*Pief.* Brave! as to that, there are some moments in which prudence is worth more than valour. Besides, I say to myself, one thing—truly it is a droll ordinance, but what harm does

it do me to salute a hat? How often do we not salute a head without brains?

*Rud.* This fellow is sensible at least, he is.

*Pief.* I! ah! well by example, submission. I only know that it—when I cannot do otherwise. If there were to come to-morrow an order to keep one's self on one leg, I would only walk hopping. This is what I was saying to myself just now, on seeing them take this brave William Tell to prison for refusing to do as every body else does.

*Jorg.* Why did he disregard the governor's order?

*Pief.* What of that, you only had to turn away your eyes, that's all.

*Rud.* He only had to doff his hat, that was all.

*Pief.* Right; indeed there is a little obstinacy in the thing, for at last the governor is lord and master, and for my part, with his own consent, I wish he were a hundred leagues off, and that he would only leave us his cap, though we had to bow to it three times a day.

*Jorg.* Hem—but is what you say much to the praise of our master?

*Pief.* It is to his praise if you choose; it is a reflection of no consequence; I do what I am ordered, I think what I choose, and tell it you with no bad intention, and as any thing else.

*Rud.* In this case I advise you to take care, because our companion considers a thing often

the wrong way, and because his ear is dull, and your tongue a little too sharp.

*Pief.* In this case I bid you good-bye. (*aside*) Very well, this poor Edwige must be apprised of what has happened to her husband. (*aloud*) Till we meet again sirs, which will not be long, perhaps—(*perceiving Mec.*) Mectal! ah, let us not irritate his too fiery spirit by telling him Gessler's new crime, but let us rather think of saving the unfortunate Tell. *Exit.*

[Rudenz and Jorg have re-ascended the stage. Mectal, (son) appears at the instant Pieffre pronounces the last words.]

(Enter Mectal, (son) Soldiers in the back ground.)

*Mec. his head is bare, and he appears plunged in a sullen reverie.* I have seen again my old father; I have conducted him myself, to a secure retreat. My hand has dressed his wounds, and in his blind eyes I have perceived anew the necessity of revenge. William Tell does not arrive. It is here, before this emblem of tyranny, that we should swear to revenge ourselves, and free Switzerland. But it is impossible for me to be inactive; I am going to arouse by my cries of alarm, the three Cantons. It is proper that they should arm at my voice, and unite themselves to my despair. Ah! there is no doubt that their noble hearts will answer to my wishes, and it will cost me nothing to fulfil the most sacred of duties.

*Air.*

O my dear country!

O my father, this day
Mectal makes a sacrifice to you,
Of his happiness, of his love!
And thou, dear Mary,
Pardon me if my heart
Sacrifice to honor.
The oath that binds us
Is the sweetest of ties.
Makes me cherish life.
My father, my country,
At this dreadful moment
Both order me
To sacrifice myself.
I call heaven to witness,
Switzerland in my vows
Will not be betrayed.
No, no, my dear country,
Fear not that to day
Mectal sacrifice thee
To the charms of love.
Yes, I consecrate my life,
It is not too great an effort,
To die in defence of our country and parent.
And if soon a hostile dart
In the combat puts an end to my fate,
Dear Mary, oh, with transport say,
That Mectal is worthy of envy.
He enjoyed a most happy life,
And had a most glorious death!

[He ascends the stage.]

[At the moment Mectal goes towards the back

ground, William runs to him, takes his hand, and brings him hastily back in front of the stage.]

*Wil.* Don't go there Mectal, they would treat you as they did my father.

*Mec.* Thy father! what has happened to him?

*Wil.* We were returning from Hermann's to join you here; when we arrived here, that great blockhead that you see down there, placed himself before us. "In the name of the emperor, stop." "What do you want," said my father. "You have disobeyed the edict, you did not bow to that cap." "I was not thinking of it my friend—permit me to go on." "No, no, to prison"—my father to prison! I cried for help—the people assembled.

*Mec.* William Tell in prison.

*Wil. weeping.* O heavens, yes. They called him traitor, seditious, and I don't know what. I hung beside him; but when we came to the door of the dungeon, they dragged me brutally from his arms, and forced me to stay without.

*Mec.* The measure is full! let us go to thy father.

*Wil.* Oh no Mectal, they are so wicked that they would keep you, perhaps, in the same prison, and then who would get my father out?

*Cry, behind the scenes,* "Give way, make room for the governor."

*Mec.* Ah! let us not stay in this place; at

the sight of this Gessler, I could not contain myself—come, come, your mother wants to see you, as I go to make sure of my revenge.

*Exeunt, on the right.*

*Enter Gessler followed by officers and soldiers.*

*Gess.* It is well—there is need of an example. They will come to after it. Where is this sentinel?

*Offi. pointing to Rud.* Here.

*Gess.* Ah! is it you that have so well done your duty? You shall have double pay, and I will take care to promote you.

*Rud.* Sire—

*Gess.* It is well—to your post.

*Air.*

No, never was seen such excessive audacity.
Dare to brave my will!
In vain will his pardon be asked.
Encouraged by impunity,
All his example would follow.

*To his attendants.*

Vainly, with their cunning address,
On drunkenness they'll throw the blame
Of his proud insolence;
To pardon, weakness would seem—
His sentence is uttered.

Their homage I demand—
Their prayers and tributes I exact.
When power falls to me by lot,
Of being kind I'm weary;
Pardon I may grant him, perhaps

If my kindness he implores.
But let him humble his audacity,
Or his sentence is pronounced.

*Enter Pieffre at the head of the inhabitants.*

*Gess. turning round.* What do they want now?

*Pief.* My lord, you will not refuse to hear us; we come to supplicate you humbly, to grant us the pardon of the unfortunate Tell.

*Gess.* His sentence is pronounced; he shall die.

*Pief.* The most virtuous man in Switzerland —as good a citizen as he is a skilful archer, generous and brave.

*Gess.* The more remarkable he is, the more terrible will be the punishment, and the more striking the lesson—let him be brought hither.

*Pief. pointing to the inhabitants.* Must we offer you all we possess to appease your anger?

*Gess.* Ah, ah, you estimate highly then this skilful archer?

*Pief.* Will you take ten besans of gold? we will endeavor to find them, and will bring them to you.

*Gess.* Ah! have you ten besans of gold?

*Pief.* We have not them, but we will do every thing we can to get them.

*Gess.* Get them then, and I order you to bring them to me.

*Pief.* And William Tell will be given back to us?

*Gess.* You shall soon know his fate.

*Enter Edwige, Mary, William, Soldiers and populace.*

*Edwige, in the greatest trouble, throwing herself at the feet of Gessler.*

Sire, sire, pity!
Let your kindness grant to us
Both his pardon and favor:
You see our alarm—
See there his son, behold his tears.

*All.*

Grant us his pardon?

*Gessler.*

No, no.

*Edwige.*

His wife is at your knees.

*Mary and William.*

His sister / His son } is at your knees.

*All.*

Take pity on his father;
Pity a mother.

*Two Officers.*

Before his death,
Suffer him to show his skill.

*Chorus.*

Behold how much he is affected;
Undoubtedly he will relent.

*Two Officers.*

Come, let us see his skill—
Yield to our desires.

*Mary and William.*

Ah! { my mother / my sister } he is affected.

This good gentleman who entreats him,
Will, without doubt, make him relent.

*Enter Tell, led by soldiers.*

*Gessler.*

I pardon the audacious wretch;
But before I grant it,
Let him take care to satisfy me,
Or let him prepare to die.

*All.*

My lord what will you that he shall do.
He cannot but obey.
Pardon! pardon!

*Gessler.*

Skilful archer, so much renowned;
Valiant hunter of this country;
In the use of the bow it is said no man
Disputes with you the palm.
At fifty paces, exactly,
You must hit an apple
On thy son's head!

*All.*

My / His son's head.

[Gessler and the officers go to the back part of the stage, and order every thing to be prepared.]

*Chorus, in a low voice.*

What an inhuman order to a father.
All our hearts are seized with fear!

*Edwige.*

May the deadly arrow,
Spare my son's life!

*Chorus.*

May the deadly arrow,
Spare her son's life!

*Tell.*

Thou seest, great God, of crime the excess.
Is it to tyrants thou grantest thy aid?
Strengthen my arm—direct my address,
And save me from the risk I run.
My son be intrepid, and let thy head
Be exposed to my flying dart, without dread.
My son!—

*William.*

My father!

*Tell.*

Then look at me,
Without fearing the death prepared for thee.
Be intrepid and worthy of me!

*William.*

Weep not, my mother,
I am proud of my lot.

*Edwige.*

My son, if thy father's hand—
Great God! what would be my lot!

*William.*

Weep not my mother,
I am proud of my lot:
If I perish by my father's hand,
'Tis to save him from death.

*Edwige.*

My son if thy father's hand—
Good heaven, what would be my lot!
What anguish for thy mother!
Good heaven! what would be my lot!

[The music continues—it expresses the lamentation of Edwige; the fear, the grief of the

people—William is conducted to the further end of the space marked out: Edwige on one side of the stage, appears to be plunged in the most violent despair. Mary is beside her. Gessler, the Officers, the Soldiers, and the people are grouped together in divers places. An internal struggle arises in the breast of Tell; his hands tremble, his eyes are directed alternately towards the Governor and the heavens. Suddenly he places the arrow on his bow, and thrice he attempts to shoot, but in vain. At last he puts one knee on the ground, invokes again heaven, rises, and shoots. The arrow pierces the apple, and continues in its course till it fixes itself in a large tree at some distance beyond the post. After having shot the arrow, he remains with his body inclined, as if he wished to follow it. The weapon drops from hand.]

*Chorus.*

Heavens! what a shot!
Ah long live Tell!

[Tell perceives his child returning to him. He runs to meet him with open arms, and presses him with transport to his heart. Edwige, panting with fear, nearly swoons in her sister's arms. Tell and his son run to her. During this mute scene the chorus continues.]

Long, long, long live Tell!
Long, long, long live Tell!

*Wil.* Father, I knew very well you would not wound your son.

*Pief. holding the apple pierced by the arrow.* The skill of Tell will be celebrated as long as these mountains rest on their base.

*Gess. after having considered the apple.* There is nothing to be said—it is a masterly shot.

*Tell, holding his son's hand.* Come, my son, let us go now.

*Gess.* No, stay.

*Tell.* And why?

*Gess.* Thou hast saved thy son—I am very willing to spare you; but answer me—you had hidden in your bosom a second arrow; I saw it. What did you intend to do with it?

*Tell, casting a stern look on him.* What would I have done with it?

*Gess.* Answer.

*Tell.* If my son had perished, I would have pierced thy heart.

*Gess.* This is too much! soldiers, seize him, and drag him to the castle.

*The People.* Pardon, pardon!

*Tumultuous movement of the peasants.*

*Gess.* Disperse all the populace. (*to his attendants*) Come. *Repulsing Edwige, her son, and Mary, who are at his feet.* Leave me, leave me, nothing can save him.

[The women raise Edwige while Tell is dragged along, and Gessler and his attendants depart; the men of the populace are in a repressed fury; their countenances downcast, their aspect fierce. They sing with a deep feeling]

*Men.*

We live, and we suffer
Such ignominy.
We live and we suffer—
That such infamy
Without a complaint, degrade us.

*Women, separating hastily from the men.*

You are no more our parents;
You are no more our husbands!
To be moved by our cries,
Indignant at our woes.
Unfortunate men, do you wail
For the dishonor of your wives,
And for your cottages in flames,
In falling to destroy our lives?

*Men.*

Let us all rush to arms!
By blood, and not by tears,
Must our vengeance be wrought.
No more delay—we must have war.

*Women.*

Hear ye the thunder?
Heaven will protect us.

*Men.*

Let us rush to vengeance!

*Women.*

The danger let us share!
Let us rush to vengeance!

[They arm themselves tumultuously; a child mounted on the shoulders of one of the peasants, lifts the cap of Gessler from the top of the post, and throws it to the ground: the

women trample it beneath their feet, tear it to pieces, and throw away the pieces. This movement of the populace takes place near the end of the chorus.]

END OF ACT SECOND.

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## ACT III.

### SCENE FIRST.

(Interior of William Tell's cottage.]

*Edwige, William, asleep, a few women.*

*Edw.* My friends I thank you for your attentions, for your kind concern. I will watch my son alone; but do you, for pity's sake, go and see what is passing, and let me know at last, if any more hope remains to the unhappy Edwige. *The women exeunt.*

*Air.*

Sleep my dear son, sleep my dear child—
Enjoy in peace the delights of a refreshing repose.
Sleep my dear son, sleep dear child.
Alas! thy poor mother,
Watches in grief.
For me, far from thy father,
There is no more happiness!

Ah! may the guardian kindness of heaven,
Spare at least a life so dear!
Sleep my dear son, &c.
Thy poor father,
Too rash,
Thy poor father
Is in chains!
Cruel reverse;
Yes, I lose him!
Bitter grief.
Thy poor mother,
Has but tears
In her misery,
In her misfortunes,
And her prayers
Do not move heaven, do not soften hearts.
Ah! I sink beneath the weight of my grief!
Heavens! I see him already dragged on to death!
I will partake his lot.
Bitter grief,
Cruel reverse.
Thy poor father
Is in chains:
Thy poor mother,
Has but tears,
In her misery,
In her misfortune,
And her prayers
Do not move heaven, do not soften hearts, &c.

*Wil. awaking.* My dear mother!

*Edw.* My son, I press you again to my bosom.
(*she parts the hair from his forehead, and looks*

*at him attentively*) is it indeed thee? yes. (*she embraces him.*) And it is as I fatally foresaw; it was I alone—a mother—who thus has exposed thee.

*Wil.* Be assured: Mectal is going to return; you know the promise he has made us—and hark, I think I hear—(*he goes to the door*) Ah! it is only the old goat-herd.

*Enter Pieffre, with armed peasants.*

*Pief.* Edwige, we come to partake of thy grief, and to mingle our tears with thine.

*Edw.* Tears! when my William is beneath the axe! What were you waiting for when he was cast into chains? How have you assisted him? Tranquil spectators, you have suffered this outrage to be committed; you have patiently permitted them to take away from you your friend, the most virtuous among you. Ah! it was not thus that he behaved to you. Is there one of you who has not to praise his courage, his generosity? And notwithstanding, what have you done for Tell in the hour of danger?

*Pief.* We were small in number, and unarmed them. *He opens his outward garment, and lets her see that he is armed.*

*Edw.* Ah! you have lost him! he is lost to the country—to us all!

*Pief.* Edwige his chains shall be broken.

*Edw.* And who will save him?

*Pief.* Ourselves—and believe my words, the day has come at last, on which to show to Switzerland all the might and patriotism that was

concealed under the coarse garments of the goat-herd of the mountains. Listen—(*all approach nearer; Pieffre speaks in a lower but energetic tone*)—the three Cantons have resolved to make themselves free; the alliance is concluded, a sacred oath binds us, and soon will we accomplish this great enterprise.

*Edw.* Do you not deceive me!

*Pief.* Ah, to day you may give credit to the predictions of the goat-herd of the mountains! It is in a free country that our ashes will repose.

*Enter Old Mectal led by Mary.*

*Old Mec. on the threshold of the door.* Yes my children, believe this prediction.

*All.* Mectal! Mectal!

*Edw.* Ah! it is the venerable Mectal!

*All bow to him and doff their hats.*

*Wil. to a peasant.* You take off your hat to him, and he does not see you.

*Edw.* Is less respect due to him on that account, my son?

*Wil. taking off his hat.* Oh! no, mamma.

*Old Mec.* Good Edwige, it is thy hand I press.

*Edw.* Worthy friend, your misfortune—

*Old Mec.* Let us speak of thine—or rather let us congratulate ourselves on the barbarity of Gessler, which hastens his ruin. Who are these that surround me?

*All.* Your relations, your friends.

*Old Mec.* My children, I saw you yesterday, I never will see you more—without this good

Mary, whose filial attachment conducts my trembling feet, and attaches itself to my misfortune, I would not be among you. Let my eyes, deprived the light, acquaint you all with what menaces you, and what your country requires of you.

*Pief.* You know that we have appointed this rendezvous for that purpose. We thought to find your son here—he ought to be the first.

*Old Mec.* What are your designs?

*Pief.* We are all in arms.

*Old Mec.* What do you wait for?

*Pief.* We wait the signals.

*Old Mec.* What signals?

*Pief.* At the appointed hour flames will be kindled on the summit of Sarnem, Angulu and Cap-Morne, and from the three Cantons will arise at the same moment, cries of courage and vengeance.

*Old Mec.* Unfortunate that I am—I cannot be in your ranks, and William Tell will not march at your head.

*Edw.* The remembrances of the outrages you have both received, will guide them in this sacred enterprise.

*Old Mec.* Children, listen—I order you to obey Mectal, my son; I make him your chief.

*All.* We will obey him.

*Old Mec.* Pieffre, in my youth, before battle, we sung in chorus, the song of Roland at the combat of Roncevaux. It excited the cour-

age of all—you ought to know it, your mother rocked your cradle singing it.

*Pief.* We all know it; but if your misfortune did not hinder you, which one of us can sing it better than yourself.

*Old Mec.* My misfortune! I am going to sing it for you.

BALLAD.

At Roncevaux,
In the vallies bright,
Roland, rushing to victory,
Gaily sung, with a spirit light,
To the companions of his glory,
To his brave comrades in the fight;
Let us for our country die.
A glorious day's worth years of shame,
The highest on the list of fame,
Have fallen to defend their country.

*Chorus.*

Let us for our country die—
Years of life are not worth glory.

How many are they?
How many are they?
When to victory we fly,
And bravely for our country die;
To meet the dangers we repair,
Nor ask how many foes there are.
Let us, &c.

*Chorus.*

Let us, &c.

*Enter Mectal, son.*

*Mec.* Here am I my friends! My father you shall be revenged. My friends, from the summits of Sarnem, that I have traversed as far as the pasture of Engelberg, I have found all hearts indignant at the crime, of which the unfortunate victim is before you. All those whom I have seen, have extended to me their generous hands. They have sworn to execute whatever seems just to you, and to follow you, even to death. Already have the flames consumed the castle of Kusnach, and the infamous Gessler has owed his safety to a precipitate flight. He threw himself into a vessel, and without doubt is at this moment in the middle of the lake, tossed about by the fury of the waves.

*Old Mec.* He is going now to acknowledge a more powerful master than himself! Ah, my sufferings will not be in vain.

*Mec.* No, my father, they will not be in vain. From the day when tyranny placed an apple on this child's head, and plunged a hot iron into the eyes of a defenceless old man—from that day there commenced a new liberty for Switzerland, an eternal liberty!

*Pief.* Flames are shining on the mountains.

*All.* These are the signals!

*Mec.* The hour has come at last!

*Mectal.*

I thirst for vengeance—
My heart calls for the fight.
Heaven, the guardian of innocence,

With a revengeful weapon arms my arm.

*Pieffre and the Chorus.*

Let us all rush to vengeance,
And with the sword be armed.

*Old Mectal.*

No more delay, no more truce.
Carry me beneath your standard,
To the warrior whom the sword would wound,
My body may a bulwark serve.

*Mectal.*

O heavens! my father, what do you say?
Thus to expose your life for us?

*William.*

No, it is I who will go with you—
Of every thing I'll bring you notice.

*Edwige.*

No, no, my son, you must not leave me.

*Old Mectal, to Mary and his son.*

Your wedding after the victory,
When we will mourn his death.
But no, we will not mourn for him;
Covered with glory he'll return.

*All.*

Of Gessler let us scorn the vengeance;
A tyrants fury let us brave,
Let us his feeble power destroy.
Let us march, march—
Yes we will conquer,
Or we will perish,
All!

[They go out, drawing their swords; the young Mectal is at their head. Mary supports Old Mectal, Edwige and William follow.]

## Scene II.

[The scene changes and represents on the right a portion of the lake; at the fourth plan on the same side, a rock. Behind this fourth plan, all the back part on the left exhibits impassable mountains; the thunder rolls, the waters of the lake are very much agitated; the orchestra executes a storm, and the tingling of a bell is heard. At the moment, it changes; a part of the mountain is occupied by women and some old men; they all have their eyes fixed on the lake.]

*A Man.* A boat!

*Another.* It is the governor's!

*All.* The governor's!

*Some of the women descend.*

*An old man.* William Tell is in the boat!

*All.* William Tell!

*Enter Edwige, William; after them Old Mectal and Mary.*

*Edw. running up.* Good heavens! the wave drives them against the rock of Aremberg. (*a clap of thunder*) Righteous heaven!

[The women descend the mountain; Mectal appears, led by Mary. Edwige and William remain on the rock. The deepest silence succeeds to the last cry of Edwige. Their anxiety

redoubles; all eyes are fixed on the lake; soon the vessel is perceived. Tell directs it towards the rock—pushes back with his foot the vessel, which disappears, and draws his bow. Edwige and Mary fall on their knees, together with all the women. This scene is lighted up like a conflagration.]

*Tell, drawing his bow.* Gessler, settle thy account with heaven!

[He shoots his arrow; Gessler is shot in the vessel, which the agitated waves bring back several times to sight. Tell descends from the rock: all his family press forward to meet him.]

*Mary.* My brother!

*Old Mec.* My friend!

*Edw.* Dear husband!

*Tell.* Edwige, my friends—Gessler will separate us no more.

[They embrace each other with transport; the sound of trumpets is heard from different quarters.]

*Old Mec.* It is Zurich.

*Tell.* Underwald replies!

*Old Mec.* It is a signal of victory!

*Edw.* The inhabitants descend from the mountains like a torrent!

*Wil.* How handsome this is!

*Mary.* How handsome! Mectal is at their head.

*Enter Mectal, son, Pieffre, inhabitants of the three Cantons.*

*Mec.* My father, Switzerland is free, and you are revenged!

[In the mean time at the sound of different trumpets, all the mountains are covered with Helvetians; many hold burning brands.]

*Old Mec.* Inhabitants of Switzerland, from on high in the heavens the Eternal contemplates us. Listen to what my heart dictates; be united, always united! and swear all, to defend forever, your independence.

*All.* We swear!

*Tell.* And I consecrate this bow to the freedom of Switzerland. *He suspends it to a rock.* A trophy of victory, it has given the last blow to tyranny—it shall serve no more!

FINALE—*Chorus.*

Ah! let us celebrate our victory!
May the illustrious records
In ages to come,
Perpetuate our glory.
Yes, may an eternal homage,
Consecrate our courage,
And repeat, from age to age,
Honor, honor to the brave Tell.

THE END.

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